

Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board Final Grant Report – January 31, 2023

Organization: Wright State University Libraries' Special Collections and Archives

Project: Digitization of Dr. Arthur E. Thomas' Program "Like It Is" Interviewing Leaders on Black America

Project Director: Jane Wildermuth, Head, Special Collections and Archives (937-775-3927, jane.wildermuth@wright.edu)

Summary of Project Activities and Accomplishments

The grant project funded a vendor to digitize a selection of 71 U-matic videotapes of the Dayton-based public affairs interview program titled "Like It Is," from the Dr. Arthur E. Thomas, President Emeritus, Central State University, Collection, featuring leaders known for civil rights activism and overcoming race and gender barriers in politics, government, education, and the arts. The program was produced from 1978-1985 by Dr. Arthur E. Thomas, civil rights activist, former Director of the Bolinga Black Cultural Resource Center at Wright State, and President Emeritus of Central State University.

The project also funded 4 TB of university server space for long-term management and preservation of the digital files (preservation master uncompressed *.AVI files and compressed *.mp4 files for reference). The video files were ingested to the designated E-Archives server space and quality checked against the metadata files from the vendor. Of the 71 tapes, the vendor returned digital files for 69 tapes, and documented that two of the U-matic tapes do not contain content, one videotape does not contain the "Like It Is" program, and three videos had severe tracking and video dropout due to poor editing.

To facilitate public awareness and discoverability of the video files, the digitized tapes and associated digital files were processed and described at the item level in a DACS-compliant finding aid for the Dr. Arthur E. Thomas Collection in ArchivesSpace; a collection-level MARC record was created for the Dr. Arthur E. Thomas Collection for WorldCat and Wright State's local catalog; and an article about the project was published by the University's Newsroom, the *Dayton Daily News*, and further distributed on our department's social media.

Records Addressed in the Project

The grant project focused on 71 U-matic videocassette tapes in MS-667, Dr. Arthur E. Thomas, President Emeritus, Central State University, Collection, circa 1920-2020. The videotapes are a selection from Series II: "Like It Is" TV Program, 1977-1983

(https://wright.libraryhost.com/repositories/2/archival_objects/249884) .

The physical U-matic tapes total 5.16 linear feet, and were fully processed as part of the grant project. The associated *.AVI and *.mp4 files of each tape were also processed. During the grant period, the

collection manager processed the collection as a whole, totaling 32.19 linear feet and 2.39 Terabytes.

Catalog Record and Finding Aid

- Finding aid in ArchivesSpace:
MS-667, Dr. Arthur E. Thomas, President Emeritus, Central State University, Collection, Wright State University Libraries' Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio <https://wright.libraryhost.com/repositories/2/resources/1090> .
- Wright State University Libraries' catalog record:
<https://catalog.libraries.wright.edu:443/record=b4795526~S10>
- WorldCat record:
<https://worldcat.org/title/1353816955>

Project Self-Assessment

The objective of the grant project was to digitize the obsolete U-matic videocassettes containing historically significant interviews with civil rights leaders from 1978-1983, to make them publicly available for research. Labels on the U-matic tapes taunted us with names such as Rev. Jesse Jackson; Maya Angelou; Rosa Parks; Nikki Giovanni; James H. McGee, Dayton's first African American mayor; Louis Stokes, Ohio's first elected African American Congressman; Larry Troutman, of the Dayton funk band Zapp, and so many others, leaving us feeling deprived of hearing how these trailblazers answered Dr. Thomas' questions during a 30 minute public forum on a range of social and economic topics that are as relevant to understanding our world today, if not more so, as they were at the moment of the interview. The grant funds provided the needed funds to free the content from the obsolete media format, so we could provide description in the form of a finding aid, and catalog record, and make these interviews available to anyone who requests them. It is a valuable gift to today's researchers and generations to come in studying socio-economic, educational, and cultural history across America in the context of race and gender.

Project Impact

Our staff has discussed plans to sustain and enhance the progress made in providing access to the "Like It Is" videos through this grant. We plan to transcribe the video interviews, and publish excerpts and eventually entire interviews in Wright State's institutional repository, CORE Scholar (<https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/>).

Archives Staff are also discussing ways to promote the Dr. Arthur E. Thomas Collection and the "Like It Is" videos to campus faculty, students, and centers for outreach and instruction. The potential use of the videos is endless, and we are excited to develop avenues to increase access to the collection.

Building Upon the Success

The project provided a catalyst for additional digitization to be done on the collections' audio and video formats. The content from the U-matic videos contains a treasure trove of viewpoints on civil rights and socio-economic issues from the 1970s-1980s with healthy debate and spirited discourse. Among the staff who have reviewed the digitized videos, there is strong agreement that the rest of the media needs to be digitized, described and made available to researchers. To that end, staff have begun digitizing media in the collection for which equipment is available inhouse, such as audiocassettes and VHS media. These digital files will be managed for long term preservation on the designated E-Archives server space purchased during the grant. Funding sources for a vendor to digitize the remaining U-matics in the collection are being investigated.

Local Press Coverage

- Harrah, Erica. [“Wright State Received Grant to Digitize Local Program Featuring Prominent Civil Right Figures.” Wright State University Newsroom.](#) May 26, 2022.

The screenshot shows the Wright State University Newsroom website. The main article is titled "Wright State receives grant to digitize local program featuring prominent civil rights figures" by Erica Harrah, dated May 26, 2022. The article features a photo of Arthur E. Thomas and a quote from Toni Vanden Bos, an archivist with Wright State's Special Collections and Archives. The article discusses a grant from the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board to digitize 71 U-matic videocassettes of the weekly television program "Like It Is". The program was produced from 1978 to 1985 by Arthur E. Thomas, Ed.D., president emeritus of Central State University. It featured firsthand accounts and opinions of leaders known for civil rights activism and overcoming race and gender barriers of historic importance to Ohio, such as Dayton's first African American mayor, James H. McGee, Louis Stokes, the first African American congressional representative elected in Ohio, and J. Kenneth Blackwell, an African American mayor of Cincinnati who later served as Ohio's treasurer and secretary of state. In addition to prominent Ohioans, Thomas also interviewed national civil rights leaders such as the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Maya Angelou and Rosa Parks. Thomas, who is as exceptional a figure as those he interviewed, graduated from Central State in 1962 and served as the sixth president of the historically black university from 1985 through 1995. He was the first alumnus to serve as the university's president. He was also the director of Wright State's Bulging Black Cultural Resources Center from 1973 to 1977, organizing programs, activities, and student services that celebrate the diverse African cultural identities as well as educate the broader community. In addition, Thomas served on the Historically Black College and University Presidential Advisory Board of former Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton and was an official U.S. representative to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994. The article also mentions that the program was produced from 1978 to 1985 by Arthur E. Thomas, Ed.D., president emeritus of Central State University. It featured firsthand accounts and opinions of leaders known for civil rights activism and overcoming race and gender barriers of historic importance to Ohio, such as Dayton's first African American mayor, James H. McGee, Louis Stokes, the first African American congressional representative elected in Ohio, and J. Kenneth Blackwell, an African American mayor of Cincinnati who later served as Ohio's treasurer and secretary of state. In addition to prominent Ohioans, Thomas also interviewed national civil rights leaders such as the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Maya Angelou and Rosa Parks. Thomas, who is as exceptional a figure as those he interviewed, graduated from Central State in 1962 and served as the sixth president of the historically black university from 1985 through 1995. He was the first alumnus to serve as the university's president. He was also the director of Wright State's Bulging Black Cultural Resources Center from 1973 to 1977, organizing programs, activities, and student services that celebrate the diverse African cultural identities as well as educate the broader community. In addition, Thomas served on the Historically Black College and University Presidential Advisory Board of former Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton and was an official U.S. representative to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994.

Thanks to a grant from the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board, Wright State University Libraries Special Collections and Archives will take on the task of digitizing 71 U-matic videocassettes of the weekly television program "Like It Is."

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Toni Vanden Bos, an archivist with Wright State's Special Collections and Archives, said that the over 200-tape collection was brought in

- Harrah, Erica. [“WSU to Digitize TV Show Featuring Civil Rights Figures.”](#) *Dayton Daily News*. June 30, 2022.

NEIGHBORS

EASTERN REGION

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MEET OUR ATHLETE OF THE WEEK. D4

REGION 5—OZER

IN BRIEF

XENIA
Fireworks at Shawnee Park

Xenia will once again host Xenia Rotary Club's annual Kevin Sonmycalb Memorial Fireworks Festival at Shawnee Park on July 1.

The fireworks festival will be held alongside the City's Red, White and Blue Block Party in downtown Xenia, which will run from 3-8 p.m. This year's block party will feature live music, sand sculptures, more than a dozen food trucks, a cornhole tournament, toy show, cruise-in and children's activities, including face painting, climbing wall and other games for children of all ages. Athletes in Action and the Xenia YMCA will also provide additional sporting activities and tutorials for kids.

The fireworks will begin at 10 p.m.

BEAVERCREEK
City issues reminder of fireworks ban

With July 4 around the corner, the city of Beavercreek would like to remind residents about the city's ban on fireworks. In March 2022, Beavercreek City Council passed Ordinance 22-12 to reaffirm the city's ban on possessing, selling or discharging fireworks within city limits.

It has never been legal for Beavercreek residents to possess, sell or discharge fireworks within the city. Council cited several reasons for reaffirming the city's ban on fireworks, including the potential for serious personal injuries and significant property damage to residential and business areas, as well as protecting the public's right to the quiet enjoyment of their premises.

Read more by visiting <https://beavercreekohio.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=266>.

FAIRBORN
Apply now for nonprofit assistance

The city of Fairborn and Greene County recently announced a partnership

REGION

WSU to digitize TV show featuring civil rights figures

Weekly 'Like It Is' featured prominent leaders.

By Erica Harrah
Contributing writer

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Thomas, who is as exceptional a figure as those he interviewed, graduated from Central State in 1962 and served as the sixth president of the historically black university from 1985 through 1995. He was the first alumnus to serve as the university's president.

He was also the director of Wright State's Boiling Black Cultural Resource Center from 1973 to 1977, organizing programs, activities, and student services that celebrate the diverse African cultural identities as well as educate the broader community.

In addition, Thomas served on the Historically Black College and University Presidential Advisory Board of former Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton and was an official U.S. representative to the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994.

Toni Vanden Bos, an archivist with Wright State's Special Collections and Archives, said that the more than 200-tape collection was brought to Wright State in 2019, but U-matic videocassettes are considered an obsolete format due to the scarcity of playback machines and the life expectancy of the tapes themselves.

"The grant funds allow us to hire a vendor who will inspect, clean and digitize the U-matic tapes to an uncompressed archival digital file format," she said. "After the digital files are reviewed for completeness and quality checked, the interviews will be described in an online finding aid for the Dr. Arthur E. Thomas, President Emeritus, Central State University Collection, which will be available online."

She said that she anticipates strong interest from educators and students at all grade levels as well as community organizations that encourage discussion and activism on social and economic issues, documentarians, authors and historians.

All of the original tapes will be preserved in the special collections and archives and will be digitized as funding becomes available. The archives also plan to begin transcribing the interviews and make them accessible as a step toward placing the digitized interviews into CORE Scholar, Wright State's institutional repository, in the future.



Arthur E. Thomas interviews Maj. Gen. Fred C. Sheffey on "Like It Is" in May 1979. CONTRIBUTED



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- Blog Posts
 - Rickey, Lisa. [“Grant Received to Digitize Local Civil Rights Interview Program Videos.”](#) Wright State University Libraries’ Special Collections and Archives *Out of the Box* blog. June 14, 2022.
 - Rickey, Lisa. [“Local Civil Rights Program “Like It Is” Now Available to Researchers, Thanks to Grant.”](#) Wright State University Libraries’ Special Collections and Archives *Out of the Box* blog. December 13, 2022.

- Twitter
 - May 27, 2022



- June 30, 2022



- December 13, 2022



Facebook:

- May 27, 2022



- June 30, 2022



Project Expenses

Equipment	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
WD 4 TB External Hard Drive -\$20.00 less than budgeted		\$109.99	\$109.99
4 TB of server space from WSU (\$850 per TB, sold in 1 TB increments)		\$3,400.00	\$3,400.00
Subtotals: Equipment	\$0.00	\$3,509.99	\$3,509.99
Contracted Services	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
Scene Savers digitization of 71 U-matics (master and access files for each) -\$10 less than budgeted from matching funds	\$4,200.00	\$681.50	\$4,881.50
Subtotals: Contracted Services	\$4,200.00	\$681.50	\$4,881.50
Other Eligible Expenses	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
One (1) Round-trip from WSU to Scene Savers to bring back tapes-- \$47.16 less than budgeted (Scene Savers picked up tapes for no charge)		\$54.60	\$54.60
Subtotals: Other Eligible Expenses	\$0.00	\$54.60	\$54.60
Summary Budget	Grant Funds	Matching Funds	Total
Equipment	\$0.00	\$3,509.99	\$3,509.99
Contracted Services	\$4,200.00	\$681.50	\$4,881.50
Other Eligible Expenses	\$0.00	\$54.60	\$54.60
Total Project Budget	\$4,200.00	\$4,246.09	\$8,446.09

Conclusion

We thank the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board for providing this grant opportunity through funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), National Archives and Records Administration. We are excited that a third of the “Like It Is” interview programs in the Dr. Arthur E. Thomas, President Emeritus, Central State University, Collection are digitized and available to the public. We are brimming with ideas to promote the interviews to the campus as an invaluable resource on African American history in the Miami Valley and across America. We will continue building upon the success of the grant by digitizing more of the media in the collection, and working toward enhancing access to the interviews by transcribing and placing them into CORE Scholar.